WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. An image forming apparatus comprising:

a photosensitive member adapted to have an electrostatic latent image carried thereon;

a developing unit including a developer carrying member rotatable in a direction against gravity at a contacting point with or a point closest to the photosensitive member, and a cover for sealing a developer to be conveyed by the developer carrying member therein, the developer carrying member carrying and conveying the developer stored in the cover to develop the electrostatic latent image on the photosensitive member; and

a clearance regulating member provided so as to be free from contact with a surface of the developer carrying member, the clearance regulating member regulating a clearance for an upper side of the developer carrying member;

wherein the clearance between the developer carrying member and the clearance regulating member is determined at a size not greater than a maximum height of the developer projected from the surface of the developer carrying member.

2. The image forming apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein when the developer carrying member is configured to have magnetic poles, the clearance for the developer carrying member provided by the clearance regulating

member is determined at a size not greater than a height of a magnetic brush of the developer at a magnetic pole just downstream of a clearance regulated position in terms of rotation of the developer carrying member.

3. The image forming apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein the clearance for the developer carrying member provided by the clearance regulating member is determined at a size not greater than a gap between the developer carrying member and the photosensitive member.

4. The image forming apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein when the developer carrying member is configured to have magnetic poles, a position where the clearance is regulated by the clearance regulating member is located between a magnetic developing pole and a magnetic pole downstream of the magnetic developing pole in terms of rotation of the developer carrying member.

5. The image forming apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein the clearance for the upper side of the developer carrying member provided by the clearance regulating member has a width not smaller than a developing width on the developer carrying member.

6. A developing device comprising a developer carrying member rotatable in a direction against gravity at a contacting point with or a point closest to a photosensitive member adapted to have an electrostatic latent image carried thereon, and a cover for sealing a developer to be conveyed by the developer carrying member

in the cover, the developer carrying member carrying and conveying the developer stored therein to develop the electrostatic latent image on the photosensitive member; and further comprising at least a clearance regulating member provided so as to be free from contact with a surface of the developer carrying member, the clearance regulating member regulating a clearance for an upper side of the developer carrying member; wherein the clearance between the developer carrying member and the clearance regulating member is determined at a size not greater than a maximum height of the developer projected from the surface of the developer carrying member.

7. The developing device according to Claim 6, wherein when the developer carrying member is configured to have magnetic poles, the clearance for the developer carrying member provided by the clearance regulating member is determined at a size not greater than a height of a magnetic brush of the developer at a magnetic pole just downstream of a clearance regulated position in terms of rotation of the developer carrying member.